

# Ron Embleton

## The Magic Apples



## Once Upon a Time

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# Once Upon a Time

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# The Magic Apples



1. Once upon a time there was a King who was very ill, and no medicine did him any good at all. He just got worse and worse, and it was feared that he would die. Then one day a clever doctor said, "Your Majesty, there is only one thing that will cure you and make you well. You must eat some golden apples."

2. Nobody knew, of course, where golden apples could be found, so the King called in his three sons. "You must go out into the world and search every corner of it, until you find me some of these golden apples," he told them. "They are the only things that will cure my illness, so please waste no time."



3. The three sons promised their father that they would do all they could to find him some golden apples and they set off on their horses together. "This is a pretty puzzle indeed," said Adrian, the eldest. "Where do we start?" "I have no idea," replied the second son, whose name was John. "We must search."



4. They came to a part of the country where three roads met and decided to split up. "It might be best if we each took a different road," suggested Adrian. "I will take the road to the north." "Very well," said John. "The south road is the one for me." "I'll go west," said Roland, the youngest Prince.





5. So it was agreed and the three boys wished each other good luck and said their goodbyes, promising to meet at that same spot in a month's time. Prince Roland took the west road and travelled for many miles until he came within sight of a large house, standing all alone in a clearing in the forest.



6. An old man was standing outside the house and when Roland came near the first thing he said to him was, "Greetings, son of the King." "Greetings, old man," said Roland. "If you know that I am the King's son then you must know that the King is ill and in need of some golden apples. Where do I find them?"



7. The old man told him a long story, telling Roland to ride fast to the Castle of the Lake, standing in the middle of a lake of black water. He also added that the Castle was an evil place, guarded by terrible things. But at noon each day every living creature in it fell asleep for one hour. "Then that will be the time for me to enter," said Roland, as he galloped away.



8. The Prince's horse went like the wind. At last they came within sight of the lake of black water and there, in the middle of it, as the old man had said, was the evil castle. "It looks a strange place and even the sight of it makes me shiver," said Roland. "I must somehow get to it at a time when all the guardians are asleep. First, however, I have to cross the lake."



# The Magic Apples



1. Prince Roland, youngest son of the old King who was very ill, had come within sight of the enchanted castle in the middle of a lake of black water. "I have been warned that the castle is guarded by terrible things," he said, "but I must go on in the hope of finding the magic apples to cure the King."



2. He called to the three white swans, swimming in the black water, asking them to carry him to the castle. The giant birds took him on their backs and spread their wings to carry him across the lake. "Take care, good Prince," they whispered, as they swished along. "It is a place of terrible danger."



3. Prince Roland knew this, but boldly marched in through the entrance doorway. He was relying on the words of a wise old man, who had told him that between the hours of noon and one o'clock each day, all those inside the castle fell asleep.

4. "The wise old man did indeed speak truthfully," murmured Prince Roland to himself, as he tip-toed between the sleeping figures of the terrible giant guards, who were sitting against the wall, with their eyes tightly closed and snoring loudly.





5. But that was not all the danger that had to be passed in the castle. Coming to a doorway, Prince Roland felt his heart turn to ice at the sight of huge lions and tigers stretched out on the floor. He expected them to leap up and race towards him, snarling their hate. But the big wild cats took not the slightest notice of him and did not even move a whisker.

6. Roland spared a moment to glance at his watch. It was half past twelve and under the spell of the enchanted sleep the guardians of the castle were not due to awaken until one o'clock. Even so, the young Prince did not dare to make even the faintest noise, as he stepped on tip-toe past the lions and tigers, who were gently purring in their deep sleep.



7. Then he came to a third door and the pathway through the room was guarded by huge poisonous snakes. But they lay about in great coils, taking not the slightest notice of Roland. "They, too, are sound asleep," he thought, but nonetheless he had to take a deep breath to make himself creep past them.



8. Next was a grand staircase. Roland went up and entered a splendid bedroom. On a golden bed lay a Princess, fast asleep. She was so beautiful that Prince Roland stood there and stared at her, spellbound and unable to move. And all the time the precious minutes ticked away towards one o'clock.



# The Magic Apples



1. In search of the magic golden apples which were the only cure for his father's illness, young Prince Roland bravely went into the dreaded Castle of the Lake—during the time when all its people and the terrible guardians were in an enchanted sleep. Among those asleep, Roland came upon a most beautiful Princess.

2. She was so beautiful that he stood and stared at her—until he remembered the time. It was ten minutes to one and soon all in the castle would wake up. The Princess's watch was on a nearby table. He put her watch in his pocket and left his own in place of it. Then he bent over the sleeping Princess and kissed her gently.



3. "Now I must hurry and not delay here much longer," thought Roland to himself. He left the bedroom and ran down a staircase which led into the kitchen. The cook lay upon her back in the middle of the floor fast asleep, holding a knife and fork.



4. Remembering that the wise old man had told him that beyond the kitchen was a garden, Prince Roland tiptoed through the door. He could hardly believe his eyes. There stood the magic tree, laden with golden apples. Swiftly, Roland filled his pocket.





5. By now it must be very close to one o'clock, when the spell of sleep would be lifted from all those inside the castle. Roland ran back through the kitchen. The cook stirred, lifted her arms and stretched herself, but did not fully open her eyes. Even the kitchen dog moved and licked its lips as though eager for food.



6. "How many seconds have I left?" wondered Prince Roland, and his heart was beating faster as the moments ticked away. Into the hall of the lions and tigers he hurried and was startled to see one of the great beasts raise its head and open its mouth in a mighty yawn, which revealed its teeth. But it did not fully awaken.



7. Prince Roland breathed a sigh of relief as he got safely past the wild cats and he steeled himself for the test that was to come. He knew now that he had to take the risk of passing through the entrance hall, where there were the giant armed guards. Their snores were already turning into waking sighs.

8. They yawned and stretched and made grunting noises. But as yet it was not exactly one o'clock, so the bearded giants did not open their eyes. Prince Roland hurried past them to the shores of the lake. "Swans, swans, come quickly," he whispered as loudly as he dared. "Now you must carry me over the lake."



# The Magic Apples



1. So far all had gone well for Prince Roland, in his search for the golden apples which would cure his father of a serious illness. Greatly daring, he had entered the castle of the lake and had taken a pocketful of golden apples from the orchard. "Now take me back across the water as fast as you can," he said to the white swans.

2. The white swans carried him over the black lake, but as their wings hissed through the air, they whispered warnings to the brave young prince. "You are not yet out of danger," they told him. "You have got past the castle guards, that is true. They cannot now pursue you, but there are other Things which will try to stop you."



3. Reaching the side of the lake, Roland thanked the white swans and untethered his horse. He leapt into the saddle and rode away at a full gallop, hoping to escape by riding hard. But it was not to be. After a while, he heard strange noises behind him and gave a fearful glance back. "What evil Things are those?" he gasped.



4. In shape they appeared like horses, but not real ones. "Are they ghost horses?" gasped Roland. "They glide through the air like phantom creatures!" Whatever they were, the Things were coming after him. They hissed and howled and roared. After that first glance, Roland did not look back. He just rode on as hard as he could go.





5. For what seemed a thousand miles, the Things hunted him, but the Prince's gallant horse was too fast for them. By the time the sun was beginning to set, Roland was able to slow down, safely out of their reach. His horse slackened to a tired walk and Roland did not drive it faster. Joyfully he saw the house of the old man ahead.



6. That evening, Prince Roland and the old man sat down together and had a meal. "Well done, Prince Roland," said the old man. "You are the first man ever to come back safely from a journey to the castle of the lake." "I owe it all to you, good sir," replied the Prince. "Without your help I could never have escaped the dangers."



7. In the morning, after saying goodbye to the old man, Roland set off to the cross-roads, where he had arranged to meet his two brothers, Adrian and John. They had also gone their own ways in search of the golden apples. "How happy they will be when I tell them that I have some of the apples," thought Roland to himself.



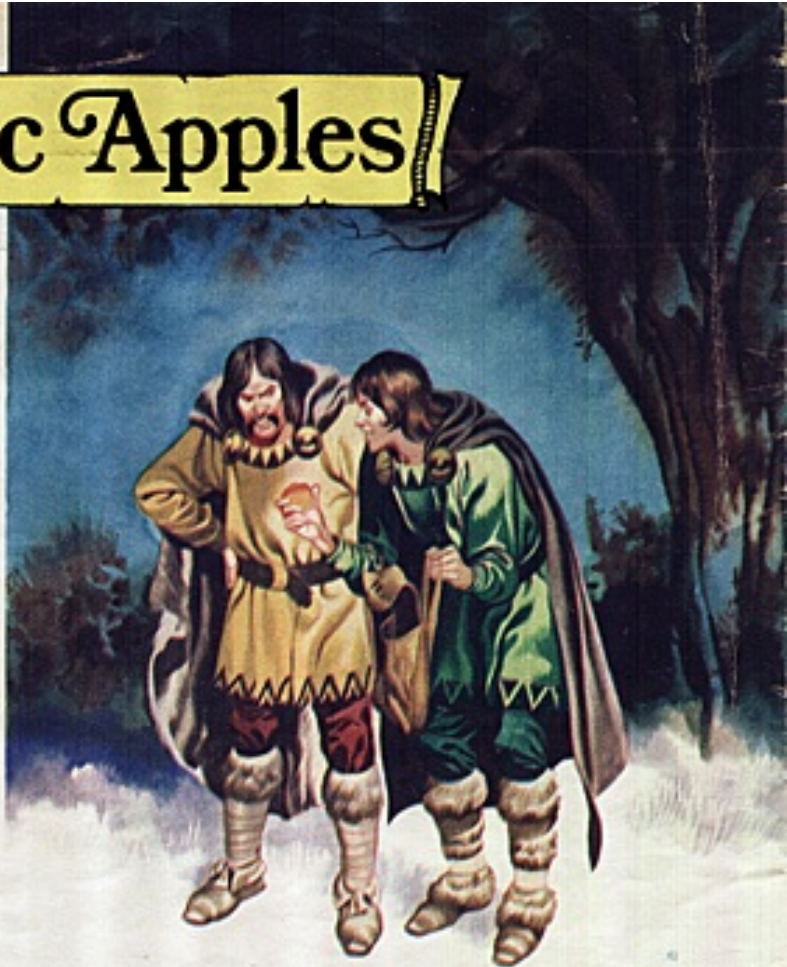
8. Seeing no sign of his two brothers, Roland prepared to wait. The day was hot and he was tired, so he lay down in the shade of a tree and went to sleep, having first lit a fire to guide his two brothers to the spot. Very soon the eldest brother, Adrian, rode up, and a few moments later they were joined by the second brother, John.



# The Magic Apples



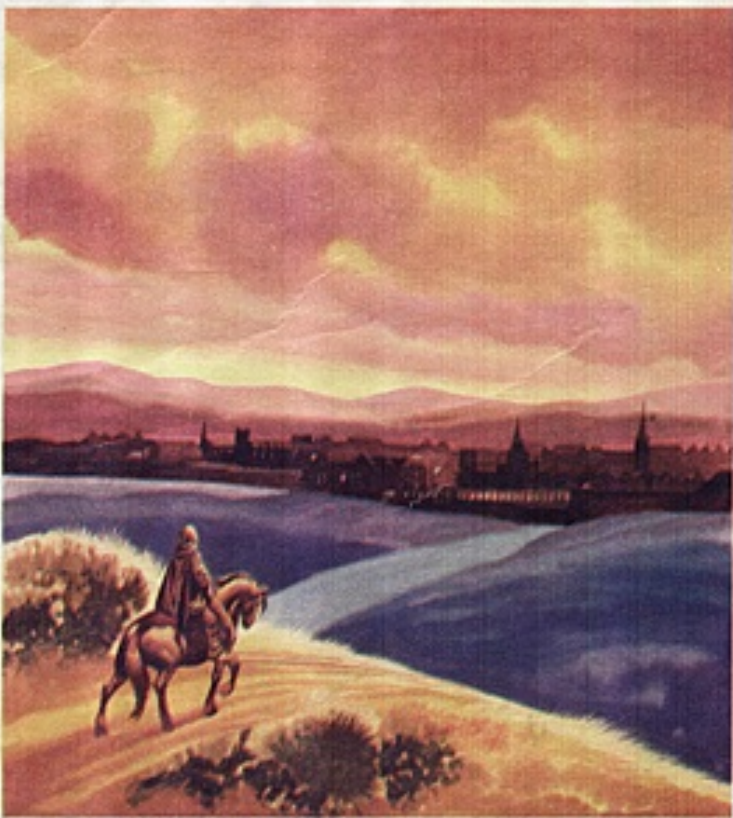
1. Adrian and John, the two elder brothers of Prince Roland, arrived at the place where all three had arranged to meet. They had also been searching for golden apples to cure their sick father, but had only succeeded in finding ordinary green ones. "Roland is asleep—let's see how he fared," whispered Adrian.



2. Very gently they pulled the knapsack from under Roland's head and peeped inside it. Amazed, they looked at each other, very upset. "He has found the golden apples!" gasped John. "What will our father say to us? He may turn us out of the Palace." "Then we must exchange them for ours," said Adrian.



3. The sun was setting when Roland woke up and stretched his arms above his head. "What a well-needed sleep I had," he said. Then he looked around. "No sign of my two brothers," he added. "Oh well, I cannot wait here all night for them. I must hurry back to the Palace and tell the King, my father, the good news."



4. Prince Roland mounted his horse and rode briskly towards the city. The thought never entered his head that his brothers had already seen and had taken away the golden apples. As he drew nearer, he saw that the city was blazing with light and he could hear the sound of church bells ringing merrily.





5. And when he rode into the city, Roland found that people were lighting bonfires and dancing with joy in the streets. "What is all this about?" he asked a man. "Why all this joy and excitement? The people are going wild with happiness." "No wonder, good Prince, for the King is cured," said the man.

6. "Yes, yes!" shouted the joyful merry-makers. "The King is well again, and it is reason enough for us to celebrate the glad news." How puzzled Roland was when he heard this. "How could it have happened?" he wondered. "My father could only be cured by the golden apples which are still in my knapsack."



7. He rode to the Palace, and there he found the King, looking well and happy, feasting with the Queen and the two Princes. "Welcome back, Roland," said the King. "Have you brought me golden apples, too, like your brave brothers?" "Indeed I have, father," Roland replied. "I have them here in my knapsack."



8. But when the King took the knapsack and opened it, his face went black with rage. "You are a cheat!" he snapped. "These are GREEN apples and quite useless. How dare you? Do you want to poison me? You are no longer a son of mine. Get you gone from this Kingdom at once, or I will fling you into prison."



# The Magic Apples



1. On the orders of the King, two of the Royal guards escorted Prince Roland to the depths of a forest and left him there. "You are banished forever from the Royal Palace," they told him, as they went away. Poor Roland sat down in despair. "I did get the magic golden apples, but I now believe that my two brothers stole them from me and gave them to my father as their own," he said.



2. This was true. Prince Adrian and Prince John had indeed changed the magic apples for ordinary green ones, thus making Roland appear to be a cheat in his father's eyes. Suddenly, the young Prince glanced round and the sight of a huge brown bear so alarmed him that he leapt for safety into the upper branches of a tree. "I saw the beast just in time," he gasped.



3. But to his surprise, the bear halted and called out, "Do not be afraid, Prince Roland. I am really a gypsy in a disguise that helps me when I am out hunting." The gypsy flung back the bear's skin he was wearing and invited the Prince to drop down from the tree.



4. "You are welcome to share a home with us at our gypsy camp," he said. "We can be friends." Prince Roland went with him to join the other gypsies and lived with them for several weeks in the forest. It was a gay life but he was still sad at heart.





5. More than anything in the world, Prince Roland wanted to go back to the Palace and to be forgiven by his father, the King. Then, one day, something happened at the Palace. A splendid gold coach drove up to the moat-bridge to the gate. In the coach was the beautiful Princess from the Castle of the Black Lake.

6. "I wish to speak to the King on a matter of importance," she told the guards. "It concerns one of his sons, who came to the Castle of the Black Lake in search of magic golden apples from the garden." Hearing this, the guard on duty swung open the barrier and the coach of the Princess drove over the bridge.



7. The King received her gladly and asked what he could do for her. "Your Majesty," she said, "I have a gold watch and also a handkerchief which one of your sons left behind in the castle. May I see him?" "Madam, TWO of my sons brought back the magic golden apples," said the King. "Here they are—Adrian and John."



8. The Princess looked at Adrian, the eldest. "Tell me," she asked, "have you been to the Castle of the Black Lake?" "Yes," Adrian replied. The Princess dropped Roland's handkerchief to the floor, for she wanted to test if he was telling the truth. "Prove it," she said. "Let me see you walk over that, good Prince."



# The Magic Apples



1. The Princess of the Castle of the Lake had come to the Royal Kingdom from which Prince Roland had been banished because his brothers had tricked him over the affair of the magic apples. "You say that you visited the castle to obtain the golden apples," the Princess said to Adrian, the eldest brother. "You can prove it by walking over that handkerchief on the floor."



2. The handkerchief was one which Roland had left in the castle and when Adrian stepped on it, he fell flat on his back. Then the other brother, John, tried to walk on the handkerchief, but he also toppled over and could not keep his balance. "Have you another son?" the Princess asked the King. "Yes, but I have sent him away into the forest," said the King, rather ashamed.



3. He agreed to send for Roland at once and two of the Royal guards journeyed to the gypsy camp in which the young Prince had been living for several weeks. He was overjoyed to know that he was wanted back at the Palace. "Goodbye, my friends!" he called out.



4. At the Palace the Princess asked if Roland had visited the Castle of the Lake. "Yes," he said, smiling at her. "Then walk over the handkerchief," she said. Roland walked over it two or three times and even danced upon it. Nothing happened to him.





5. The Princess knew then that Prince Roland was the man who had braved the dangers of the castle to obtain the magic golden apples. But as further proof, he offered her the gold watch he had taken from her room. Both became aware that they had fallen in love with each other and scarcely took any notice when the King sent away the other two Princes because of their cheating.



6. "Brave Roland," said the Princess, "you broke the spell on the Castle of the Lake where I was held prisoner. What can I do to repay you?" "You can marry me," suggested Prince Roland, and the Princess did not hesitate for a moment to agree to this with all her heart. Next day, by order of the King, the wedding took place and there was never a happier time in all the Kingdom.



7. But the joyful Prince and Princess did not forget the kind gipsies who had looked after Roland so well, during his stay in the forest. Whenever they went riding together they made a point of visiting the encampment to see their gipsy friends.

8. Because of the magic golden apples, the King was cured of his illness, and reigned over the Kingdom for a long time, but there came a day when he had to hand over the throne to his youngest son, who became King Roland and ruled very wisely.